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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the dialogues and debates of 27 secondary school principals who discussed at length the emerging problems of providing a pertinent education for young people. Among the topics discussed are a description of a relevant curriculum according to students and teachers; the teachers' roles in student teacher relationships; effects of grading on students; gaining community support; student rights; and ways to change the school environment. (Photographs may reproduce poorly.) (Author/MLF)

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An Occasional Paper

toward a more relevant curriculum

Report of a National Seminar



I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand.
(Chinese Proverb)

AND IT CAME TO PASS throughout
the land that those among the young,
whose business it was to learn,
became dissatisfied and mightily so.

"Shall he who hath not read
Hamlet be condemned to eternal
damnation?" they asked in their
innocence. "Shall the memorization
of endless dates and unremitting
facts truly erupt in a fountain of golden
success? When the classroom bell
tolls, doth it sound for me — or thee?"

And the answer was loud — and
it was clear: "Seek ye that which is
meaningful unto thyself, that
thine own life be true."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

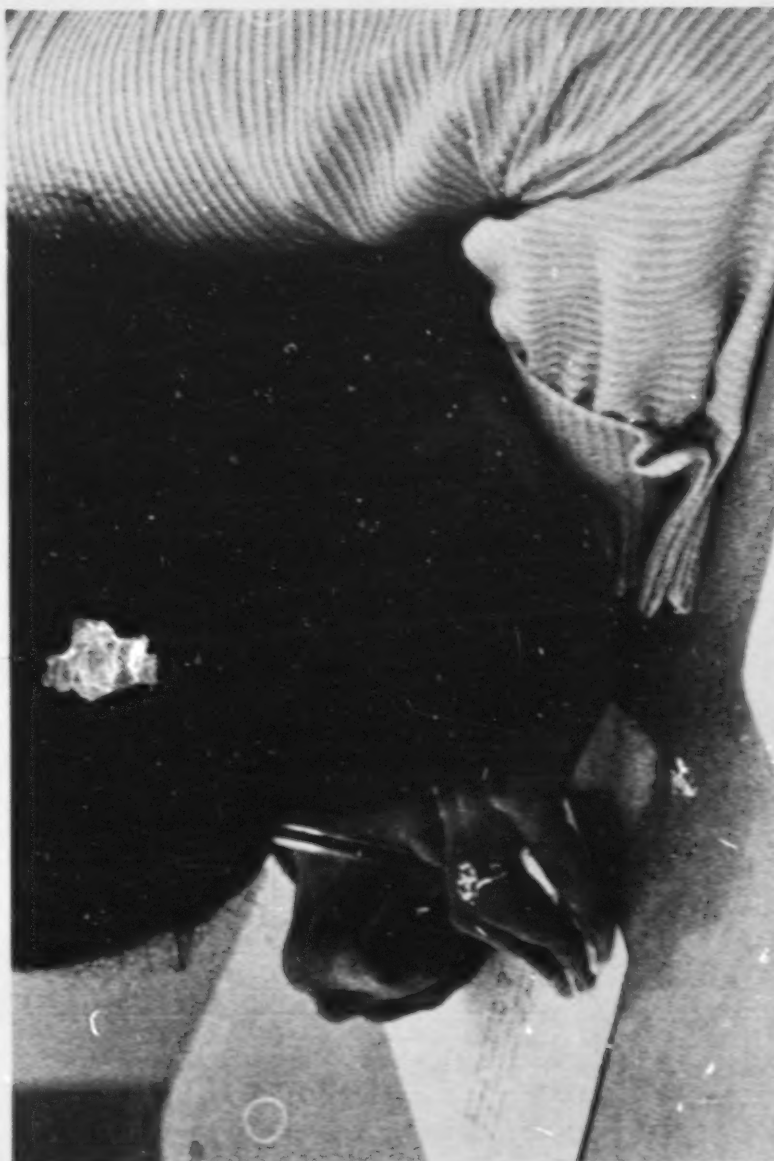
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An Occasional Paper
**toward a
more relevant
curriculum**
Report of a National Seminar

Jointly sponsored by
The Danforth Foundation,
Institute for Development
of Educational Activities, Inc., and
National Association
of Secondary School Principals

"We cannot tolerate another generation that knows so much about preserving and destroying life, but so little about enhancing it. We cannot permit our children to come into their maturity as masters of the atom and of the gene, but ignorant and barbarous about the ways of the human mind and heart."

Alvin C. Eurich



Jan. 1971

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introduction

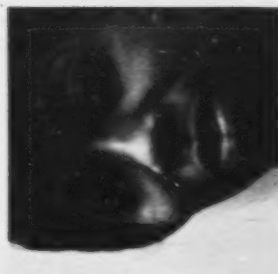
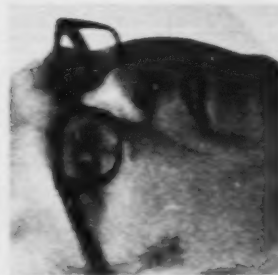
Perhaps New York City high school student Paul Steiner said it best when he wrote: "We've had TV's, cars, and subscriptions to *Life* magazine. It's time we started subscribing to life."

- How can American educators inject "life" into a desiccated curriculum?
- What do today's youngsters consider to be "relevant"?
- What do their teachers think is "relevant"?
- Can there be a relevant curriculum under the present "quiz-test-exam-mark" system?

For 10 days, 27 secondary school administrators from 16 states discussed these and many other aspects of relevancy in a retreat-like atmosphere under the direction of rotating leaders. The principals then returned to their respective school districts for three weeks to consider their deliberations in light of their everyday jobs. During the second 10-day period, they returned to the seminar for additional dialogues between themselves and outside resource people. The tempo of the schools during the interim had its impact on the seminar. One principal was a day late for the second session because of a riot at his school. Two were unable to return because of potentially explosive situations in their schools. Another principal mediated a serious student confrontation in the interim between the two sessions.

This report summarizes the dialogues and debates of principals who discussed at length the emerging problems of providing a pertinent education for young people. The seminar was jointly sponsored by The Danforth Foundation, Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc., and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

• *New York High School Free Press*, No. 6.



the relevant curriculum and other priorities

"It really isn't too difficult to achieve general agreement about the goals of education," the conference chairman told the assembled delegates on the opening day of the seminar. "It is generally accepted, for example, that the school has a major responsibility for preparing youth for today's society, and that the student should be able to read, write, speak, and master his numbers."

"However, this agreement crumbles as soon as we talk about priorities — when someone starts insisting that reading is more important than auto mechanics. Then the real battle begins when educators and laymen face alternatives on what knowledge, skills, and values are needed by young people. Which of these are best taught by the school and which should be left to the home, church, or to chance?"

How can these decisions be made more sound and easier to reach? "First of all," suggested one of the consultants to the seminar, "we must assume that the school is only one educational institution. We must not confuse schooling of the whole child with the nonsensical notion that the school should take responsibility for the child's whole education. This is an important distinction."

"We have no precedent in history for a society that is going into its sixth generation of universal elementary schooling and its third generation of universal secondary education," he reminded the assembled administrators. We can no longer overlook the additional impact of the audiovisual media to which children are exposed from infancy. Data from biologists are beginning to indicate that we are dealing with an upward shift in intellectual

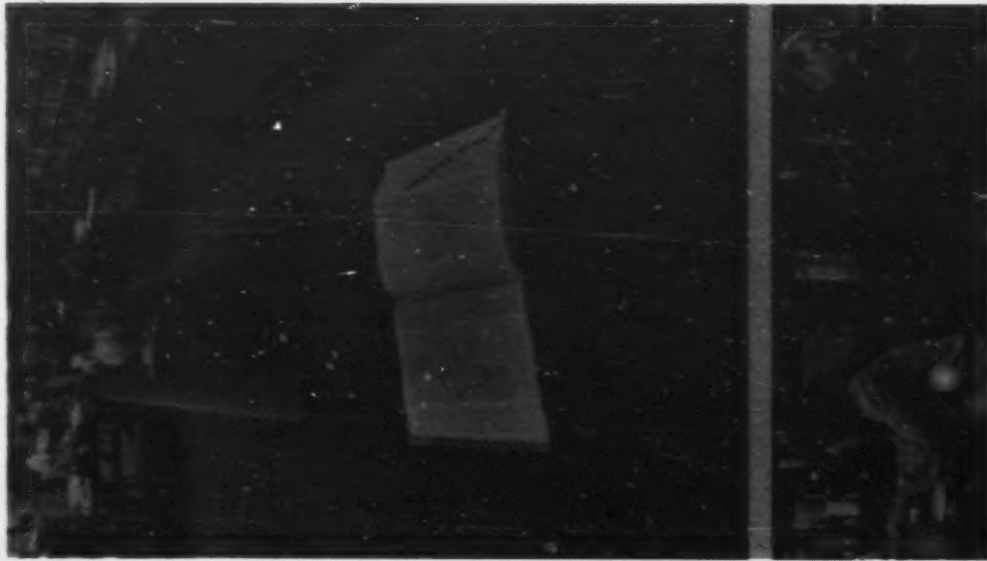
ability, attributable to several factors, particularly better prenatal and infant nutrition.

This consultant related several interesting hypotheses that have been advanced by Dr. James S. Coleman of The Johns Hopkins University. Developments in society outside the school would indicate substantial change in the missions and activities inside the institutions, particularly those of secondary schools:

- The level of information richness has risen radically, expanding the child's horizon through vicarious experience. Formerly, this provision of vicarious experience was supplied almost exclusively by the school.
- There is an information pluralism — children are now exposed to diverse perspectives.
- Cognitive ability is being developed through institutions and mechanisms other than the schools.
- Computer and other data-processing technology are transferring from teachers to other media the imparting of cognitive skills.

Accepting these assumptions, one would have to ask whether the schools will wither away. Dr. Coleman thinks not. He sees new and different demands of society and also believes that functions formerly carried out by other societal institutions will be transferred to the schools. As he sees it, the problem is that our once action-rich, intellectual-poor society is now the reverse — particularly for young people. Society is not giving young people a chance to play significant roles. Therefore, the schools must assume the function of action-base for the young.

A crucial function for the school is to help the child develop skills and strategies for handling, assessing, organizing, and applying information in this action-rich society. Simply imparting information



is no longer the primary function of the school. The urgent need children have today is to make sense out of the world — relevance.

Dr. Coleman assumes that most youngsters are somewhere near the zero point where one's nose is just barely above water in terms of a sense of ability to cope with the environment and society. Schools have to help provide the surroundings and preconditions in which children can develop a sense of access to effective knowledge.

honesty in approaching curriculum relevance

"I'm beginning to wonder what it is going to take to get youngsters really interested in school. My own children are going to beautiful new schools with carpets and all the finest equipment, yet they are totally unimpressed with the education they are receiving." Speaking as a parent, this administrator echoed a recurring statement of the conferees that a large number of schools are giving lip service or tokenism to the relevant curriculum. "You can walk down the hallway of your own school, and, if you are honest with yourself, you will see things going on in the name of education that are ridiculous." Topics which are important to adults, such as politics, world affairs, religion, abortion, sex, love, family planning, and inflation, are rarely discussed in depth and with meaning in the classroom.

A resource leader felt that relevance means what life ought to be rather than what life is now or will be in the future. "Relevance must refer to the content and the form of the learning experience. You have to come up with learning experiences that are suited to the comprehensive style and temperamental characteristics which differ





from one ethnic group to another. You have to consider what is really social or utilitarian to many such groups within today's school." He believed that students are calling for school experiences that will definitely provide them with competences which will expand their functional or vocational options. This doesn't mean copying those things that generally are done for all of the students. His point was that such relevance must refer to materials and experiences that relate to these youngsters in terms of their own background.

A respondent questioned what is conceived of resources and materials. "In addition to the normal items, this may include the school itself, personnel, the community, and other alternatives. One of the biggest hopes for urban education is to learn how to use the city as a resource."

This individual did not see where organization may be relied upon to make the difference in relevance. "The studies I have seen indicate that ability grouping makes little difference except as the way it is perceived by the students and used by the teachers. Administrative organization has impact only to the extent that instruction, content, materials, and opportunities are modified."

One of the biggest problems is that educators have no way to judge the effectiveness or relevancy of a particular school program. The present criteria is not very reliable. For example, a school board will look at the number of merit scholars or students going on to college as the chief measure of success. A principal agreed with this castigation. "I used to spend hundreds of hours in classroom observation watching the teacher. One day I got smart and started watching the students. They are, for the most part, bored stiff!"

A speaker complained that most of the things going on in schools today get in the way of moti-

vation. "The only purpose of any presentation is motivational — to get the student interested in doing some independent study." He declared that 60 percent of a student's time in the first grade is involved in independent study. This high percentage is never duplicated again in his educational career until graduate school.

A great deal of discussion centered on independent study as an expedient means of adding relevance to the curriculum and providing sufficient challenge to superior students. Independent study means not only reading, writing, and viewing, but doing. "You never learn until you do something and evaluate it. Then you receive feedback and make changes in a never-ending continuum."

The participants' attention was called to the fact that a variety of groupings exists in independent study. Any program of this type must have an organizational structure that caters to the motivation of the participants. Students do not learn at the same rate. They command and use a variety of rates. Through a series of options, progress is accomplished by providing opportunities for students to pace their learning to suit their individual style. The intent of such a program should be to make individual learning attractive and exciting so that each youngster will no longer be afflicted with "groupism." Under these conditions, education becomes both grouped and ungrouped. Some courses are better suited to two or three class meetings per week with the other days being used for small group study or individual research. Small group learning, like independent study, is a high involvement type of learning activity. In combination with independent study, the two techniques are unbeatable. The specific intention of intervening independent study with small group dynamics is to add the supporting activity

of social learning to the process of individualized learning. Group achievement is built upon differences. Consequently, the most effective groups are those which have a high degree of heterogeneity.

A consultant voiced an interesting analogy when he likened the traditional teacher's role to that of a milk pitcher. "Most classrooms are witness to a large pitcher pouring the milk of knowledge into 30 empty glasses. At examination time, the glasses pour the milk back." He said this technique is psychologically harmful because it fosters a dependence on an ultimate source. "In truly individualized instruction, the teacher's role shifts from that of a milk pitcher to that of a travel agent." If the teacher changes his role to that of an intellectual travel agent, he:

- Communicates mutually or interdependently
- Makes attractively visible the destination possibilities or alternatives
- Takes into account individual differences knowing that everyone will not want to go to the same place at the same time in the same manner
- Facilitates learning experiences without becoming personally involved himself

This speaker emphasized the need for each student to know ahead of time what the objectives are. This way he is committed to the objectives and works toward them in his own style and on his own time schedule. The student is primarily responsible for evaluating his progress through criteria established with the teacher. He proceeds to the next unit only after he has mastered the objectives of the one on which he is working.

Probably the only place a student is ever allowed to take the initiative is in kindergarten. "Then we decide that we have to start struc-

turing the classes in elementary, junior, and senior high." This kindled a dialogue on providing students with options. "The goal of education in these times should be to teach individuals to make wise or good decisions." In order to do this, the student has to be furnished alternatives. The resource leader contended that independent study is part of this because students should apply for such work through their own motivation. "Immediate things that any school can do are to allow the student to elect his courses, determine the depth of his program, and decide on the comprehensiveness of treatment he wants to undertake." He did not believe it mattered so much what a student was learning, but that he was learning!

the faculty's role in the relevant curriculum

"The trouble with teachers is that they know too much about their subjects." This consultant believed teachers have become too subject oriented. They supply answers rather than stimulate the students to dig up their own answers. He drew a definite distinction between knowing a subject and knowing how to teach a subject. Defining a principal as a "teacher of teachers," he declared that the principal should begin with the assumption that the teacher knows practically nothing about teaching and learning.

"Teachers instruct as if all their students are going to become professional historians or history teachers, when, obviously, the percentage who will be extremely small. Some students need only to be exposed to a subject, others need a speaking knowledge of it, and a few students want to be completely immersed in the subject. Schools should accommodate all of these options." He

contended that every teacher should prepare at least one learning package. In this way, the idea of teaching concepts to students is internalized and the teacher gains a better understanding of the sequence of conceptual learning.

The participants were urged to alter their faculty meetings to become large group instruction for the purpose of motivating toward change. Then, through independent study, trying the technique, evaluating the results, utilizing feedback, and making improvements, the new practice will be implemented. "Giving your teachers the freedom to act, to think, and to create lets them set the stage."

A participant related his experience with letting the faculty develop their own style of change. "With my staff, it took two years to convince them that I wasn't there to impose a program. Secondly, everyone didn't have to subscribe to the same program in order to make the system work. Our social studies teachers initiated some group learning. Our English program became non-graded. Our mathematics department utilized programmed instruction. So we were not searching for the package, the program, or any specific model into which everyone would have to force themselves. Once they felt comfortable and understood that the program they adopted was the one most expedient to meet the goals they had set, then we were ready to go ahead. Since they had the prerogative of returning to their former style of teaching if they wanted, it was easier for them to try something new and different for a while."

The basic difficulty with most experimentation is that the goals are not completely understood. One outside consultant suggested setting up a school where all the objectives that people can reach in the various subject disciplines are



clearly established. "It would be like a supermarket in that the student could come anytime he wanted and work toward whatever objectives he wanted. Such a learning situation would not have class hours or scheduled meetings in the usual sense. Students would simply come shopping and work toward objectives. It becomes a matter of what objective a student is working toward. The student keeps working until he masters that objective."

Another discussion leader explained that one of the reasons students are underachievers is that they do not understand what they are supposed to learn. Teachers do not make the objectives sufficiently clear. This allegation precipitated a lengthy discussion of the classroom pressures on the teacher.

"You cannot put a teacher on display for five hours a day, five days a week, and expect a continuously stimulating presentation from the teacher. Now a teacher has the additional competition of television." This principal asserted that students are looking for as exciting a performance in front of the class as they see on the television set. "That is a tough assignment."

Another administrator challenged him, "This is the very reason that, over the nation, we are more ready for change than even the teachers are willing to admit. Teachers are begging for assistance from someplace, some direction. With a realistic amount of probing on our part as principals and even a minimum of backing from our boards of education, the teachers are ready."

Organizational development has been called the scientific management of planned change. Change happens. Students become activists, and change is thrust upon the school. What can a principal do to create the climate where change



can occur in a planned way? A necessary component in the process of change is a period of disorganization. If the principal wants to bring about change during that disorganization, people have to recognize that what they are doing is not working. Finally, they come to the point of admitting that the situation is deplorable and something must be done. When people are at this point, then change may be implemented.

gaining community support

Following a school disruption, one of the principals began going into the community and meeting with groups of 15 to 20 parents. "I always take along another staff member from the school. These sessions are used to answer questions and clear up misinformation about the school. I try to be completely honest and not cover up any of our problems. This has enabled me to locate many of the things that are bothering people."

Another administrator, whose local situation has been calm, sets up "block coffees" in order to meet with people in the community. A student accompanies the administrator to each meeting. The experience so far has been that the student usually does much of the talking. "We are approaching this with the attitude that people mean well and have a right to be concerned. As school people we should listen and give our side of the story."

In one Midwestern city where the board of education was experiencing great difficulty in gaining taxpayer approval of school bond issues, board members and administrators took to the streets on Saturdays and Sundays. They went from

house to house, discussing school problems with parents. One principal called this practice "the best educational public relations program in the country today."

compassion is part of curriculum relevance

"The human problems of education so often outweigh the academic problems." Agreeing with this statement by a resource person, a participant disclosed that the problems of discipline, drugs, and racial relations have completely superseded the curriculum as the primary concern of parents in his area. "This is especially significant since my community is very college-oriented." Yet the parents' worries are not generally shared by their sons and daughters.

"In meeting with combatant students following a disruption in my high school, I was astounded by the appeal these young people made," this principal told his fellow conferees. "These students said they would really love to meet their teachers. They asked me, 'Is there no way that we can get to know our teachers as people?' " The students believed they could help the teachers to understand the young people if they could talk to them in an informal setting. At the same time, the students would be gaining a better understanding of the teachers. Even in the shadow of a school-wide riot, these students felt that this new relationship with teachers would benefit their education. The school is now working in several areas to bring about this change.

Speaking to the problem of interpersonal relations, a consultant opted for shedding the advisory relationship which so often exists between

students and teachers. "If the issues underlying student unrest are the lack of interpersonal relationships, then it doesn't do any good just to free the teacher's time. There has to be a way to free students' time and provide a place where they can meet." One school he visited had large departmental offices which were open to students. All students were allowed honor study whereby it was assumed that each student entering that school could be trusted "until he demonstrated otherwise — regardless of his marks. Each student was assigned to five classes but was free to go anywhere in the school at any other time. If he abused his freedom by cutting classes or going off campus, then he was assigned to a study hall. "Freeing the students' and teacher's time and giving them an open meeting ground was found to be an excellent means of interaction. A lot of students were moving through these offices and many were not the ones that normally would be expected to meet freely with the teachers. The teachers were quite relaxed in that type of setting."

do marks have a place in the relevant curriculum?

"You can't do your best when your energy fades, cereal helps you get better grades!"

From a breakfast food manufacturer's television commercial

"The grading of a student's achievements in high school is relative — and therefore not relevant," one of the administrators stated. "If John receives an A- in English, and Mary receives a C+, what do these grades really mean? Both students passed the course, so the letter designations tell us only that John's mastery of the material covered during the school year, by one particular teacher in one

particular subject area, was superior to Mary's understanding of the same material under the same conditions. The conclusion that is usually drawn (John is a "better" student than Mary) is erroneous in the light of a relevant curriculum. Since both of these students have about the same general intelligence, a more logical conclusion would be that Mary's interests and abilities were not stimulated sufficiently by the subject matter and/or the teacher.

"Therefore, it seems obvious that when we impose letter grades on the achievements of students, we are not rating the youngsters at all — rather, we are rating the effectiveness of the curricula."

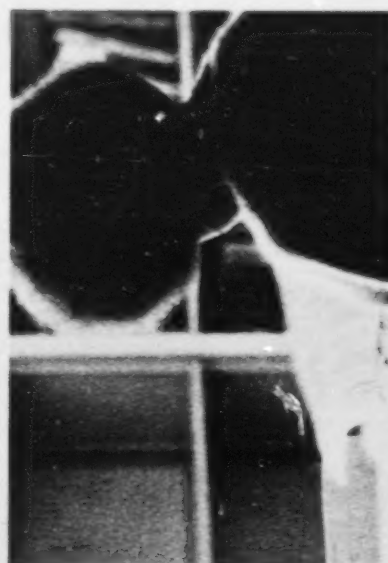
A consultant to the seminar agreed. "Even in schools which have begun to group by ability and achievement, the general practice is to assign marks of A and B only to the highest-achieving groups, while marks of C and D are automatically given in the remedial groups." It is hardly fair for an intellectually handicapped youngster or a seriously working remedial student to be marked on the same scale as the academically gifted. Even when working at his best rate, this student receives a low or failing grade. "Confronted with a rigid marking system, a remedial student may work at his top mental capacity and never receive a passing mark, while an academically able student might put forth little effort and still make a high mark. No wonder confusion and apprehension are evident among students, parents, and teachers about the marking and reporting practices of many of our schools."

Indeed, students are complaining about the high school grading system, be it letter or numerical. One conference member made reference to a letter to the editor which was printed in *The Open*

Door, an underground high school newspaper, published in Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

Dear Editor:
I consider myself an average student with an average ranging from about 80 to 88. My question is: What is 80? In school, the teachers mark you in numbers. Should this be done? When I learn what I am supposed to learn, I am usually satisfied. I can't see why I should have to be dissatisfied just because some teacher doesn't like me or doesn't think I've lived up to my abilities. After all, the question is: Have I learned what I was supposed to? Not: How much of everything have I learned? Or: How much of this book have I learned? I think that we should be marked on a pass-fail basis. In other words, we are marked on a report card either "P" or "F." I realize that this would be "unfair" to the ones with very high averages, but what of it? It would eliminate the bitter struggle going on between the normal guys and the brains. It would eliminate the "brownie system" in which teachers (not all of them) mark some guys higher because they get along well. It would also give a student more time to learn a course he is actually interested in or will do him more good than another required course. I propose that schools would start to mark required courses this way and gradually proceed to change the others over a period of semesters until all courses were marked this way. This would avoid confusion but still get it done.

"What is tragic about that letter," a participant observed, "is that the writer was compelled to resort to an unauthorized school publication to get his views across. Why couldn't that student have talked the matter over with his principal? I guess the answer is pretty obvious."



Too often school administrators approach change with pusillanimity. In a letter to chief state school officers, the United States Commissioner of Education requested that schools not require certain grade averages before students could participate in cheerleading squads, but he made no similar request about the requirements for playing varsity athletics.

Apparently, even the Commissioner of Education is fearful of arousing the ire of state activities associations which control athletic eligibility. It is interesting to note that these groups which are composed entirely of principals are more traditional and hidebound than any other educational organization.

the atmosphere for a relevant curriculum

"The structure of the school, with the power appointed from above, and the structure of each class, with the words of the teacher equaling the truth, serve the purpose of training students to accept the present system and their places in it. What matters in school is that you stop questioning and criticizing and begin to memorize what you're told is right. It makes no difference what it is (math or social studies) or whether it's true (black people were happier in slavery), what you dig by the time you get to high school is to give the right answers on the test."

The New York High School Free Press

Another of the seminar consultancies reported that investigations conducted by the United States Office of Education have revealed four basic kinds of concern voiced by high school and college students. These same concerns are being



voiced in different ways by parents, teachers, and principals:

- The question of dehumanization of institutional life — a loss of identity and personal touch evident within the institution
- The concern for the inequities in society
- The whole question of educational irrelevancy
- The problems of racial and cultural discrimination and differences found certain similarities and differences between high school and college disorders. While the issues are alike, the manifestations are dissimilar. For example, spontaneity is an evident trait of high school disorders, which often exhibit a riot-like personality. College disorders tend to be more planned. In high school, more student-to-student conflict is displayed than at the college level.

"What concerns me most as I travel around the country," the consultant explained, "is that the following differentiations are not made, particularly by principals:

- Respect for authority versus fear of authority
- Authority in exposing ideas versus authority in imposing ideas
- Self-discipline versus obedience

"Many of the adults in our schools seem to think there are certain ideas that authority must impose on students. As educators, we think we are responsible for a child's learning. We are not; they are responsible for their own learning! Social research has found that a neurotic relationship will exist whenever one human being assumes responsibility for another human being's thoughts, feelings, or behavior. The teacher can only be responsible for structuring conditions conducive to learning."

The idea of punishment and reward which is practiced overtly or covertly in most schools is

based on the premise that there is one unambiguous right answer as determined by authority. Any other response is going to be punished. The conferees felt that this was the key factor behind a series of negative effects on students as human beings, which are evidenced in most school systems today.

- Students are taught from the outset that they should be afraid of having certain things happen to them — poor grades, punishment from authorities, humiliation, ostracism, and failure. From elementary school through high school, school officials use these fears as a weapon to establish and maintain order and obedience.
- In order to be "successful," students must learn to suppress and deny feelings, emotions, and thoughts that are not in line with what the teacher feels is acceptable. In place of these honest feelings, emotions, and thoughts, students are taught that to "succeed," other exteriors — dishonest though they may be — must be substituted. This is the explicit message conveyed throughout a student's 12 years in school.

- It is soon obvious to students what types of responses are likely to be successful at playing the school game. And so, before too long, a student's approach to questions and problems undergoes a basic change. It becomes clear that approaching a question on a test by saying, "What is my own response to this question?" is risky indeed, and totally unwise if one covets the highest grade possible (and the school system teaches the student that he should). Rather, the real question is obvious to any student who knows anything about how schools work, "What is the answer the teacher wants me to give? What can I write that will please

the teacher?"

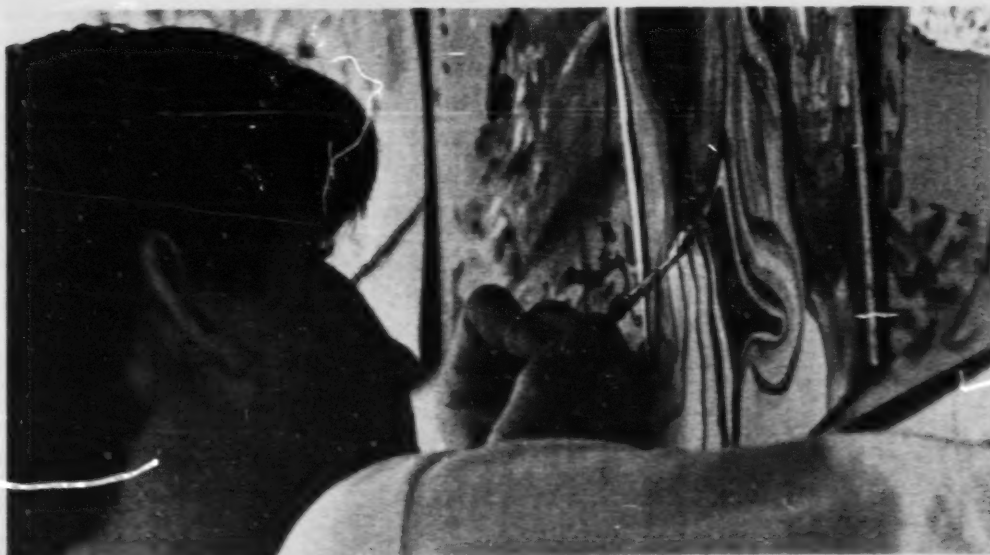
- The school system takes young people who are interested in the things around them and destroys this natural joy in discovering and learning. Genuine, honest reasons for wanting to learn are squashed and replaced with an immediate set of rewards (which educators say are not ends in themselves, but which nevertheless become just that). Real reasons for wanting to learn — the students' own reasons — are not treated as though they were valid.
- With its dishonesty and premium on dutiful obedience, the school system causes feelings of resentment and alienation, whether these feelings are expressed (as is becoming more and more the case), or hidden and submerged.
- The range of ideas to which students are exposed by the school system is pitifully narrow, especially in the earlier grades. Through use of textbooks that give only limited perspective, and through use of curricula and teacher attitudes that are confining, students' minds are conditioned to accept that with which they are familiar and reject what seems foreign.
- By insisting that the schools remain intellectually isolated from ideas and cultures that do not blend with those of the immediate community, school officials have the effect of solidifying and perpetuating local prejudices. Only with the free exchange of ideas and life styles can students gain a broad outlook.
- Perhaps most tragic of all is what the school system does to the emotional and mental attitudes and subconscious of its students. The system, for instance, is willing to label students as failures at age 8, 12, or 17 and does. In addition to the fact that this often serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy, this action



has a cruelly damaging and degrading effect on students, and is inexcusable.

"What is worth noting here," a seminar delegate remarked, "is that this list of destructive effects was compiled not by a team of outside experts, but by high school students themselves! Moreover, these students put together a list of 24 specific changes which they thought should be implemented."

1. Establish an ombudsman office, responsible directly to the board of education, to investigate and resolve complaints from students. This objective individual, who is generally a person of the community respected by students and faculty alike, bases his recommendations on personal discussions, investigations, and analysis of a situation.
2. Stop the intimidation of students by school officials through abuse of college recommendations, grades, secret files, and permanent record files.
3. Give the students an important role in the shaping and implementation of curricula. They are also in an excellent position to provide meaningful feedback through continuous evaluation of the effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses of their classes.
4. Allow student input in teacher evaluations. Students are in the best position to provide valuable information concerning whether a teacher is stimulating, creates enthusiasm, is responsive to individual needs and problems of his students, can relate to students (and vice versa), and treats students with respect for their human dignity.
5. Eliminate tension and rigidity from the schools. This implies a change in attitude — an elimination of the approach which says that when



6. students express themselves, verbally and through interaction, they pose a threat to the "authority" and "order" of the school system. Hire educators and researchers to examine deeply what effect the school system has on a student's self-concept, creativity, and desire to explore and learn.
7. Eliminate all letter grades. In elementary and junior high schools, grades should be abolished immediately, and replaced with written evaluations by the teacher. In high school, a student should simply receive credit or not receive credit for each course he has taken. In order for the students to get feedback as to how they are progressing, teachers should provide students with written and/or oral evaluations as often as necessary. Students should receive a copy of all written evaluations; a copy should be entered in students' files, but should not be released to colleges without student-parent consent. If a complete change is made for all the schools within the county, colleges will have no choice but to consider each applicant from the county on his individual merit; they would be forced to do without grades and class rank in evaluating applicants.
8. Encourage and allow teachers to respond to the individual needs of their students. This will mean fewer regulatory restrictions and, subsequently, more flexibility.
9. Allow students to exercise control over what happens to them in school. For example, give them the right to transfer out of a course if when they feel that the course is not satisfactory, the right to go into independent study at any time, and the right to formulate their own goals and to decide the best ways

- of achieving them.
10. Replace rigid class periods in secondary schools with shorter and more flexible modules.
11. Grant students the right to print and distribute their own publications without setting up restrictions or imposing obstacles.
12. Allow students the freedom to decide what they want to print, not only in student newspapers but in yearbooks and literary magazines as well. Censorship by sponsors or principals, whatever the degree of subtlety, must not be allowed.
13. Give outside speakers a chance to talk to students without favoritism or discrimination.
14. Refuse to provide the names and addresses of high school students to any outside organization without the express permission of the student and his parents.
15. Develop relevant courses to meet student interests. Students should be surveyed as to what courses they would like to see offered, and the results should play a determining role in the direction of course offerings. Racism, urban life, suburban life, drugs, human relations, foreign policy, police-youth relations, and civil liberties are a few topics of great need of curricular development.
16. Consider the use of the community as a classroom for "service learning" in an extension of the high school curriculum. Interested students could "apprentice" themselves (for school credit) to a local dentist, architect, librarian, artist, or newspaper editor. Other students might work in child development classes with elementary children, in the fire or police departments, in hospitals, or in rest homes.

17. Allow students to arrange voluntary seminars, or mini-courses, to be held during the school day. If schools are to become really relevant, students must be allowed — indeed encouraged — to set up discussions, hold workshops and seminars, and hear speakers who are well-informed about the subjects that interest teenagers.
18. Expand the range of resources. Diversified paperback books giving different perspectives should play an important part in widening the scope of thought and exposure in the schools. Textbooks alone are just too limited in coverage and perspective.
19. Inform students of their rights. If the school board agrees that students do have rights, then it must be willing to make these rights directly known to each student.
20. Eliminate restrictions having to do with student dress.
21. Hold seminars for teachers in the areas of human relations, racism, and progressive teaching methods.
22. Integrate into classes such as American history and problems of the 20th century, material which thoroughly explores all cultural minorities and minority viewpoints. Special training should be provided to teachers in order to make them qualified to deal with this important aspect of American history and society.
23. Allow school board hearings for students. It is important that school officials come into contact with the concerns of students. The board could schedule hearings every two weeks, at which time students would be invited to voice suggestions and air complaints.
24. Elect students to participate in school board meetings. Every semester the school board

should supervise the election of student representatives from every county high school students, who will attend and participate in all school board meetings.

expanding the curriculum and freeing the student

In discussing civil liberties in the relevant high school curriculum, the conferees agreed that the average student is unaware that he has any rights. Administrators wishing to dispatch with "difficulties" as smoothly and efficiently as possible, do nothing to change this feeling.

The typical student sees himself as being at the mercy of school administrators; and in practice, indeed he is. However, a national committee that studied student rights made this statement regarding the young people's legal position, "Students have the right, as the clients of an institution, to guide the effects the institution has on them. As other institutions exist to serve their clients, schools at all levels exist so that people attending them may learn. More than most institutions, schools influence the course of their clients' present and future lives. Students, therefore, have the right to substantive influence over the educational program, including the goals they pursue, the topics they study, the learning materials available, and the criteria for accomplishment."

The school system must not be afraid to inform every student directly of his fundamental protective rights. For example, when students study the United States Constitution and its amendments, their interest will be greatly enlivened if they read, analyze, and discuss recent Supreme Court decisions affecting students' rights under the Fourteenth Amendment. The conference

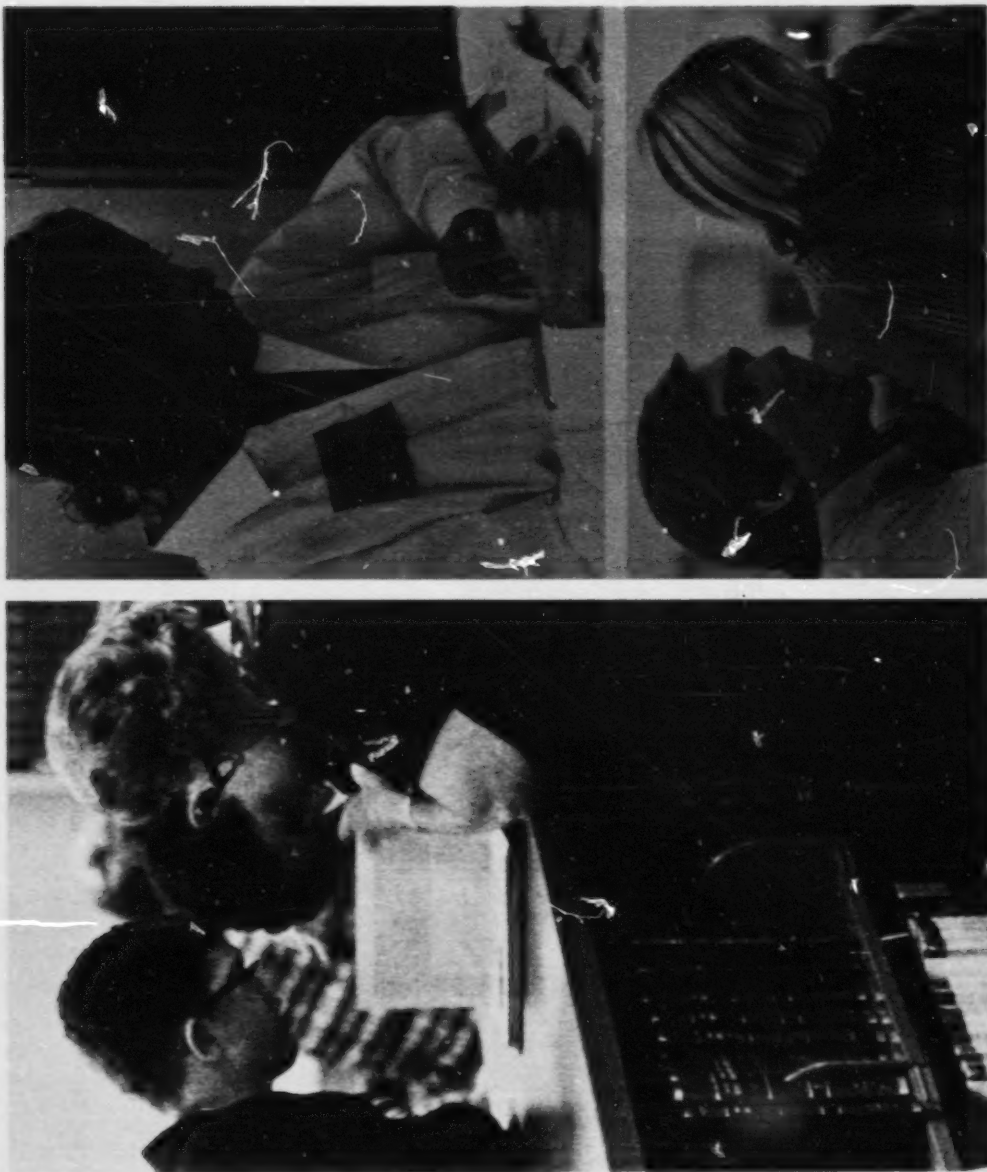


referred specifically to two landmark Supreme Court decisions. In *West Virginia State Board of Education et. al. v. Barnette et. al.*, the Court stated that: "The Fourteenth Amendment protects the citizen against the state itself and all of its creatures — boards of education not excepted." In the more recent case of *Tinker et. al. v. Des Moines Independent Community School District et. al.*, the Court's opinion read that: "School officials do not possess absolute authority over their students. Students in school as well as out of school are 'persons' under our Constitution." The unfortunate part is that textbooks dealing with the social studies do not print either copies or excerpts of these decisions. Consequently, it is incumbent upon the teacher to procure copies from the clerk of the Supreme Court. Both of these court cases bear heavily on the student's rights and belong in any course of secondary social studies.

Charles E. Silberman, who spent several years analyzing court cases involving students, is of the opinion that for a school administrator to suspend a student, he must:

1. Provide notice in writing of the charges
2. Draft a summary of evidence on which the charges are based
3. Allow the right of a formal hearing with the student's parents or attorney
4. Give the student the right of cross-examination
5. Provide reasonable time for the student to prepare a defense

Silberman states further that, "since repression fails anyway, it may be worth trying freedom. There is evidence that it can work — that even 'difficult' and 'disruptive' students can respond to an atmosphere of trust, particularly if administrators do not



confuse trust in the students with sentimentality about them."

Corporal punishment in today's high schools also came under attack during the seminar. A consultant said that the school board in his community recently reinstated corporal punishment after a 10-year reprieve. The local newspaper, in a story headlined "Spanking in School Approved," reported:

Most of the discussion was devoted to details of corporal punishment such as the position of the buttocks, whether standing or bending over during the spanking process; time at which principals should be consulted on a paddling; and the extent of liability protection for those doing the paddling.

"This is not only ridiculous, it's downright inhumane," the consultant declared. "How can we expect the students' respect when they know that we're allowed to whip them?"

developing the relevant curriculum

"We are in an entirely new era as far as curricular development and instruction are concerned," a consultant declared. Another speaker agreed with this vernacular analysis. "The functions of the school and the transfer of information are being taken over by outside sources ranging from 'Sesame Street' to mail order learning institutions." Attention in the past has been focused primarily on the cognitive areas, on information, and on knowledge. "So, too often, in curricular revision, the content is updated so as to provide more of the subject rather than more teaching about the subject. The discipline has been refined from the

knowledge or skills area." Now increasing emphasis is being placed on the values, attitudes, emotions, and feelings of students as important aspects of what they are learning.

The environment of the school is one of the curricular dimensions if the educator is considering the curriculum in terms of what students learn and how they learn it. A consultant reported that a number of studies indicates that the climate of the school is a significant factor in terms of students' aspirations, motivations, and quality of learning. "You can't look at just social studies or English, as such, in considering a curricular change. One has to take into consideration the environmental factors of the school. These are just as important in terms of what is learned, as the specific subject information. In looking at curricular alternatives, one of the changes the administrator may want to consider deals with altering the whole environment for learning rather than rearranging particular topics." It isn't necessary, in many cases, to change the content of a curriculum, but to change the strategies for teaching and learning. For example, this might involve utilizing the discovery method, the inquiry technique, or team learning methods. The learning that takes place is quite different if the teacher uses different strategies.

This consultant perceives the secondary school's job as providing a student with the knowledge, skills, insights, motivation, aspirations, values, and attitudes that will enable him to continue growing and learning and to become involved after graduation. "High schools should be graduating self-generative learners. The idea of imbuing students with a marketable vocation is limited. These skills can be better learned outside the school. A student who has a sound general education and self-worth orientation has the capability

of learning the skills necessary for a vocation."

In an age of increasing specialization, it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine which subject disciplines to include in a school's curriculum. The most important single change a school can make in its curriculum has to do with its mechanisms for responsiveness. This means the ability to be able to diagnose individual as well as group needs. The school must then respond with ways and means of meeting those needs. "Educators give too much lip service to individualization and too little attention to the nature of individualization. The best kind of individualization is what the student does for himself." Recently some educators have been able to help students diagnose their own needs and choose the help they feel is needed.

Ultimately, all individualization is done by the student because his nervous system is not wired to anyone else's nervous system. Therefore, it is he who ultimately differentiates by what he learns and how he learns it. It is our responsibility to create the environment and the conditions under which he has exposures and opportunities for practicing this self-individualization. If we can accept this notion, then start looking at what can be done and what needs to be done, we can approach curricular development quite differently. More attention needs to be given to procedures for laying out various curricular opportunities from which the students can pick. It is then the teacher's job to help them choose among these alternatives."

How administrators perceive instruction for teaching determines how they want their teachers relating to the students. It is generally accepted that instruction consists of the teacher saying or doing something to the student. What if this were reversed. Have the teacher open up opportunities

for the student to become involved. This delegates responsibility to the student.

During the small-group instruction period, the participants did a great deal of soul-searching about their profession. "We have been too insistent that everyone do it the same way. You need variation." Another principal agreed. "School should give people an opportunity to try on some roles and get an idea of what life is or can be. Now they are filled with measured proportions of specified subjects and pushed on out into life in a 'here I come, ready or not' style."

One school leader gave consideration to exploding the structured day. "You can't study astrology at 10 a.m. You need a night class for this. Summer is the best time to study biology, and a riverbank or lakeshore is the best place to conduct the class." Another participant suggested opening up typing classes so that a student can start it whenever he sees the need. "We have forced the students into time and space slots. These need to be loosened!" A discussion leader quipped that: "These ideas consist of tinkering and patching the old wineskin. We have to replace the constipated way of teaching with more active lessons, with teachers and students discussing."

between the scylla of tradition and the charybdis of relevancy

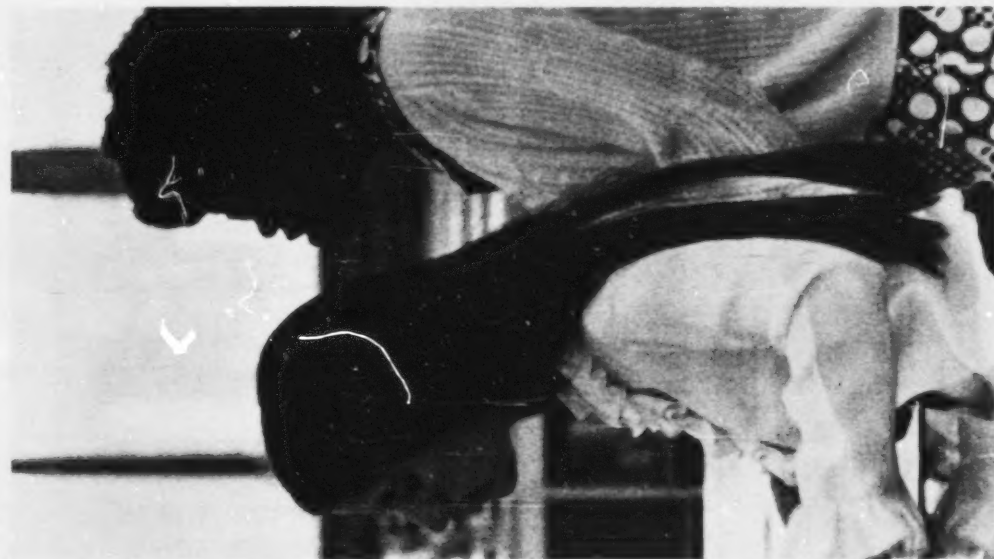
Foreign languages are one discipline being buffeted by the relevant-curriculum turmoil. Foreign language instruction, which burgeoned after the Russians launched their Sputnik in 1957, has experienced outside attacks, internal debate, and serious examination of its goals and methods.



Enrollment in some high school language courses, which generally have not been required but have been strongly recommended for college-bound students, has declined. Language instruction in some elementary grades, once hailed as a sign of a truly progressive school system, has been cut back or is under scrutiny because of budgetary pressures and reassessments of academic priorities. Many parents consider foreign languages as an academic "frill." Faced with charges of irrelevance, declining student interest, and stiff competition from such new courses as environmental studies and community service, language requirements are being modified, reduced, or eliminated in many school systems. Such program cutbacks and eliminations are by no means universal. Some schools are satisfied with their language programs, although there is no evidence of expansion. Since Americans are geographically isolated from exposure to many languages, they haven't exhibited much enthusiasm for the tedious exercises believed necessary to learn another language. Several experts claim that the foreign language instruction's current problems are representative of a general reexamination of academic curricula and their relevancy to the needs and desires of today's students.

A growing number of colleges and universities including Yale, Brown, Stanford, Trinity, and Wesleyan, have abolished the undergraduate language requirement often along with other required courses. Duke, Haverford, and the University of California at Los Angeles have reduced required language courses and similar action has been considered by many other schools. After much debate, Ohio State University abolished the foreign language requirement for its Ph. D. candidates.

In an effort to bring themselves in line with student preferences, many secondary school lan-



guage departments are emphasizing the more practical conversational uses of a language, rather than reading literature or writing essays. As a result they are using current foreign periodicals as texts.

putting curriculum relevancy in perspective

Too much of the schoolwork is completely unrelated to the young person's outside world. Too often, the school has become a fortress and an end in itself. Students need the stimulation to pursue work outside of school, but because they often cannot see the relationship of schoolwork to the day-to-day world activities, many students miss the whole point of an education. School should be a place in which students can express their own ideas, based on their observations and experiences, and gain satisfaction from knowing that the school is interested in what they have to say. School is seen as a place to learn the facts, to study the accepted and non-controversial ideas of others. Students believe that the school does not value what they might bring from their world to contribute. The essence of this is that the teacher must learn to teach more than what is important to him in his own life.

A speaker put the meaning of curriculum relevancy on a postage stamp when he declared that to students it means, "for me, for here, and for now." To fit these superbly simple criteria, a school's curriculum will have to evolve continuously. This is something in which the rest of contemporary American society and culture has been engaged for many years. As a way of meeting this demand, a group of participants

developed a continuing evaluation technique for each course in the school. The group's leader contended that "in order to start any realistic and long-lasting curricular change, the staff has to decide what the school system's philosophy is, supplemented by any theory of ideas practiced at the building level. Then they must develop a series of objectives in line with this total rationale."

In establishing a school's philosophy, there should be professional, student, and community representation. The objectives are developed in line with this stated philosophy. The same representative people most likely would be involved in writing the objectives. At the level of methodology, the bulk of the work is performed by the professional staff. Below this are the actual learning activities that take place in the classroom and are carried out by the faculty.

At the point of evaluation, the community and student representatives are brought in for their feedback on how well the program is fulfilling its intended philosophy. The balance of the evaluation team might well consist of all the department heads. If it is found not to be fulfilling the stated philosophy, then the curriculum team must use this feedback to take a comprehensive look at the philosophy. If the philosophy is considered in order, then the team looks at the objectives and works right through the steps making changes until the particular course becomes established curriculum. Part of the follow-up to evaluation should be a report to the school board as to how well the system is working, and what is needed to improve it.

Once the pattern of the technique is implemented, each discipline is under continuous evaluation so that minor revisions are made to keep the

subject area abreast of the student's world. Present practice is to wait until the degree of general dissatisfaction reaches a level where a massive overhaul is inevitable. The result would be a modern, up-to-the-minute curriculum where the subject becomes anything which a student can study with profit and pleasure. The purpose of education today is to instill in individuals the skill to make wise decisions. This means that the school program must provide a variety of choices and alternatives.

Once students have acquired a good mastery of the basic skills and tools for learning, there should be a minimum of required courses at the high school level, and student choices should begin with the opportunity to select from a veritable smorgasbord of activities.

Living with the relevant curriculum

A resource person declared that the school program often contributes to the maladjustment of youth. "Teachers and counselors, the school curriculum, and the teaching methods must accept students as they are, and help them to understand the fine features and the problems in any environment." The school program needs to accept its clients and help them to develop the motivation and the skills needed to move on from that point.

He observed that the school clutters up the students' days and years at all age levels with so much content and training for so many skills that not enough time is left for creative and in-depth studies that interest the students, or are in line with their individual talents. For example, biology is the study of living things. The idea is





that all people need to have a better understanding of how to cope with and utilize other living things. Hence, the biology curriculum for students in the inner city should consider rats, roaches, and weeds. These three important living things make up the real world there. But teachers in school biology laboratories have these same students staring into microscopes, or dissecting frogs and rabbits.

Schools need to provide better communication between learners, teachers, and the process of education. Keeping the foregoing philosophy of curriculum in mind could reduce the required content significantly so that individual students could find time for advanced work in fields where they have special interests or talents. More important, the content would make sense to the learners because it would be more useful in everyday living. The contemporary school curriculum emphasizes content and skills that many students neither need nor want.

"Somehow, this whole area of education must be taken from the theoretical to the practical, from reading about to doing something about, from superficial to basic treatment. Patriotism in this country demands much more than knowing the Presidents, the Constitution, and the important victories in our wars." He suggested better utilization of school and community resources as one way to accomplish intercultural education. "Present efforts to change textbooks by adding information about the place of Negroes in United States history and putting a few black faces in them are commendable but quite inadequate to give white students and others an understanding of Negro culture." The same thing is true of other racial and ethnic groups. History as taught in the schools is too much the story of wars and too little the story of mankind generally.

A good curriculum is depicted as one which entails a great deal of material, involves vast and difficult reading, calls for many theses and brings top grades only to a select few. The speaker placed part of the blame on what he termed, "A fetish on reading!" Some people will inevitably do better by listening, doing, or seeing rather than reading. "Most of us know how we learn best and so do most students." He called for providing students with alternative ways of learning.

Such a program was described by one participant. "We have a facility where we can send students who are alienated from the normal high school situation. It is co-sponsored by the board of education and a social institution. Students are given a totally different type of educational experience. It utilizes small groups, multimedia presentations, and noncertified personnel from the community and nearby colleges. It is under the direction of the school board. The students who attend it can still receive credit from the high school."

The program approach to teaching vocational agriculture was put forward as a model for today's reluctant learners. This approach depends on close student-teacher contact. The teacher visits the home and is aware of the student's home situation. A great deal of teamwork and cooperative planning is involved. The student carries much of the responsibility for his work. The teacher is a true resource rather than the bestower of knowledge. However, the conferees did acknowledge that the success of other high school vocational programs is at best dubious. A new approach favored by most administrators is the use of the performance contract for vocational programs. For example, instead of a student spending two or three hours a day working in an expensive auto mechanic shop built and maintained at the high school, under the

performance contract concept he could be trained in a local auto mechanic shop. The contractor is not paid until the student exhibits the success of the training. In the above example the owner of the auto mechanic shop is paid a specified sum by the school system after the student apprentice demonstrates satisfactory skill growth.

the relevancy of service learning

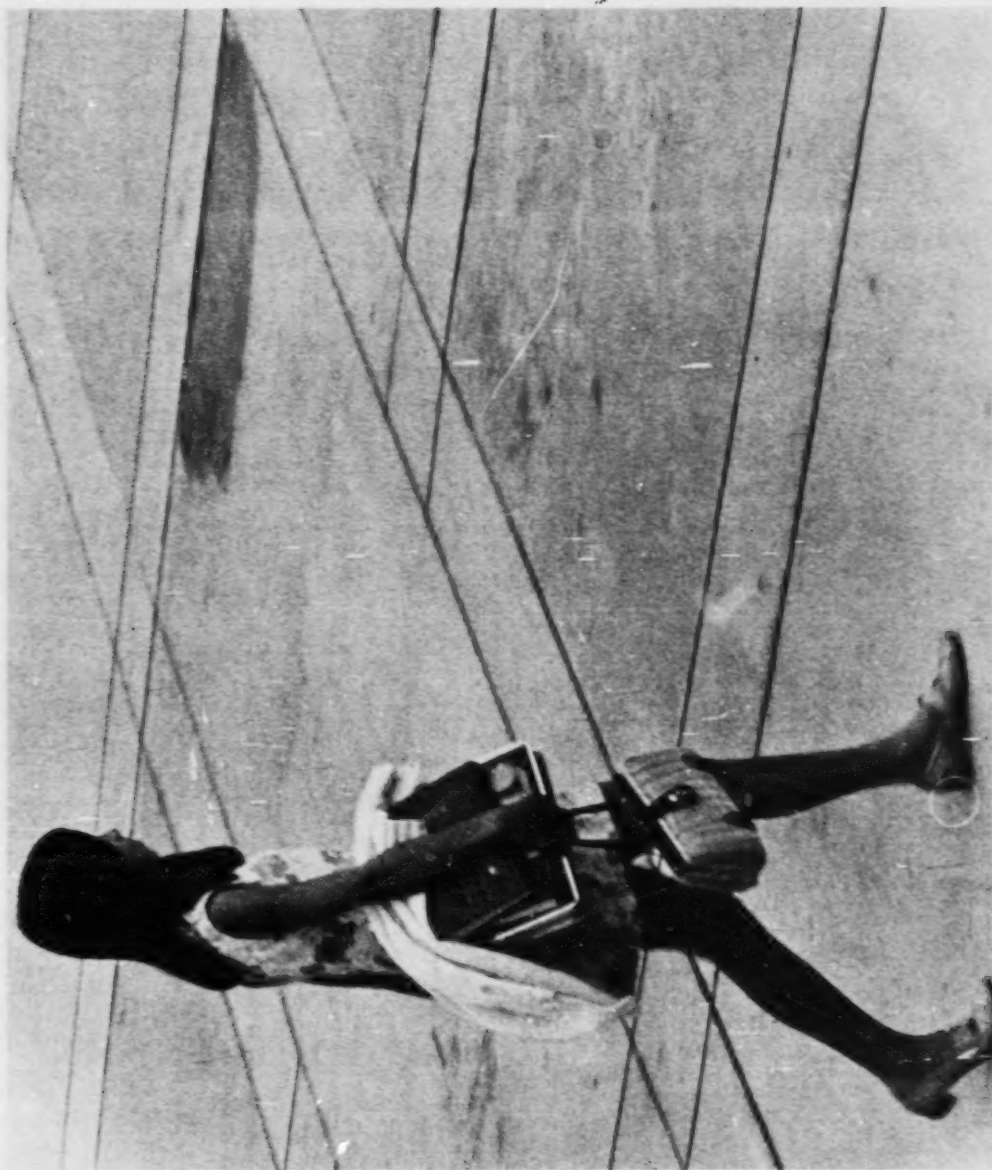
The subject of service learning was given particular attention by the conferees who felt that the implementation of service learning programs was an important and inexpensive first step to consider in secondary curricular reform.

Practically all high schools in the United States have organizations that are called service clubs. Unfortunately, the service performance is severely lacking in vitality. This may be because the high school service clubs are emulating their more sedate parent organizations.

While all of these youth organizations are referred to as service clubs, their concept of service usually means selling fruitcakes at Christmas time and giving the proceeds to the crippled children's clinic.

"The problem," said a seminar consultant, "is that our secondary schools need a viable concept of service with an emotional involvement. By this, I mean much more than merely being of assistance to someone. Service has been too often equated with servitude. Today's young people want a service experience that is not only a contribution to the welfare of others, but is also a broadening and tantalizing self-experience."

A survey of high school students resulted in the following variety of reasons why teenagers



feel they need service learning.

- "It helps me get a better perspective on myself and society." Meaningful service experiences while in high school can provide valuable expertise for young people who, at the magic age of 18, suddenly find that they must make major life decisions regarding marriage, higher education, and career choice.
 - "School doesn't provide me with any real experiences." Self-confidence and responsibility are qualities which cannot be acquired vicariously. Development of them requires confrontations with real-life situations including the specter of failure.
 - "I can't figure out what line of work I want to go into." Service experiences help prepare high school students for the career mobility that they may face in later life. In the last generation, a person expected to change jobs a few times within the same career; now young people may expect even to change careers.
 - "I've always felt that I wanted to do something to help people." Service learning provides an avenue to adventure, and acts as an outlet for teenage restlessness and enthusiasm.
 - "I've got a lot of time on my hands and I'm bored." Youth needs service to discover the rewards and value of service. This knowledge is important to teenagers as they order their priorities for their lives. As technology allows people more and more of their own time, service deserves to be one of the main contenders for the utilization of leisure time.
- What kinds of service learning programs may be set up in the high school curriculum to help meet these needs? Diversified cooperative training programs are good models for service learning. Students should be allowed to work in service

activities during the day and receive high school credit for them. Possibilities for service learning activities which exist in almost every community are:

1. Working in hospitals
2. Working in homes for the elderly
3. Working as volunteers in fire departments
4. Working as teacher assistants in elementary schools
5. Working with students who are slow learners within the high school
6. Working with public health officials
7. Working in the welfare department
8. Working in orphanages

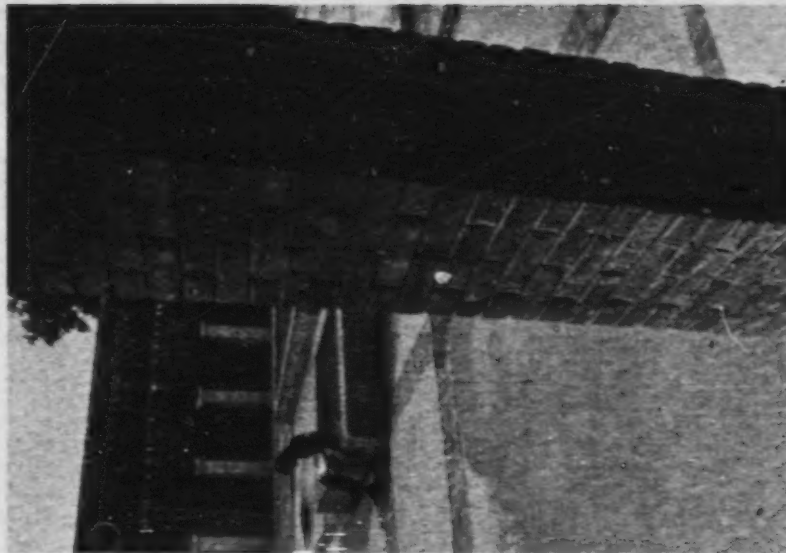
Although service learning does not include such things as cleaning the school campus, it should involve the concept of being of help to someone.

"Every high school student should receive not only service learning experience, but also work-study experience," an administrator contended. "Too often, in the past, work-study programs have been designed to involve only vocationally oriented students and a stigma developed around the work-study concept. Actually, such a program may be of tremendous help to all teenagers."

While this work-study approach was pioneered by some small liberal arts colleges more than 10 years ago, its use in public high schools is relatively new. Schools that have established successful work-study programs — such as the Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, and Wheaton North High School in Wheaton, Illinois — report sharp reduction in dropout rates and overwhelming enthusiasm on the part of participating students.

The youngsters spend part of their academic day working in such diverse fields as architecture,

dentistry, television, child care, archaeology, and printing. Once the community becomes their classroom, and high school students actually use local facilities and resources as an extension of the high school curriculum, they find that these valuable experiences become, in themselves, a relevant education.



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